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Matsui Argues for National Flood Insurance Bill That Will Aid Sacramento Homeowners

Includes Matsui Language to Modernize FEMA's Flood Zone Designations; Additional Amendment Would Phase-in Rates Over 5 Years, Starting at Lower, Preferred Rates

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D-Sacramento) [spoke on the floor](#) of the House of Representatives during debate on the rule for H.R. 1309, the National Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2011. Congresswoman Matsui spoke about the need for the full five-year reauthorization of the Flood Insurance Program, which allows property owners in participating communities to purchase flood insurance.

H.R. 1309 includes language from Congresswoman Matsui's own legislation, H.R. 902, which would modernize FEMA's flood zone designations. Specifically, this provision will update current law to take local, state, and federal funding into account when determining flood zone designations. This is a critical step forward for the Sacramento community, whose residents have continue to invest in Sacramento's flood protection priorities – contributions that will now be recognized by the federal government.

Matsui also announced that she will offer an amendment when the House resumes debate on H.R. 1309 next week. The Matsui amendment would phase-in the cost of flood insurance over five years for recently remapped areas, with the starting point as the Preferred Risk Policy (PRP) rate, as opposed to the 50 percent of a full priced policy starting point that the current version of H.R. 1309 establishes. The Matsui amendment would make flood insurance more affordable to already struggling homeowners.

Congresswoman Matsui's prepared remarks from today's debate are below. To watch a video

of the Congresswoman's remarks, please click [HERE](#) .

"A full five year reauthorization of the program is critically important to our nation. I want to thank and commend Chairwoman Biggert and Ranking Member Waters for their leadership on this issue. Ushering in a five year reauthorization will provide welcome relief to those that live in our country's floodplains.

"I also thank Chairwoman Biggert for including language from my own H.R. 902 – legislation that would modernize FEMA's flood zone designations – into the bill before us. Specifically, it would update current law to take local, state, and federal funding into account when determining flood zone designations.

"H.R. 1309 would extend the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) for five years and allow property owners in participating communities to purchase protection against flooding. As we have seen across our country, this year and in recent years, the NFIP is critically important to so many Americans. When a flood disaster strikes, the homeowners that have flood insurance can at least see their way through the crisis. The NFIP offers the victims of floods the ability to make their lives whole again.

"Of course, the best 'insurance' against a flood is a strong flood protection system. In my hometown of Sacramento, California, residents have taxed themselves hundreds of millions of dollars to pay for stronger flood protection.

"On one project in the Natomas Basin alone, state and local governments will have spent more than \$350 million over the last five years on levee improvements. This has all been invested, I must point out, without acknowledgement by FEMA or funding from the Corps of Engineers. I am working tirelessly to change that, and ensure the federal government follows through with their commitment to this project.

"There is no doubt that the Natomas Basin, like most of Sacramento, is at risk of flooding as it lays at the confluence of two major rivers. We know we must continue to build up our levees, as well as carry flood insurance.

“Fortunately, the Sacramento region is working with the Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Water Resources to implement an aggressive levee improvement plan to achieve a 200-year level of flood protection. While these efforts are ongoing, flood insurance has become mandatory for many homeowners insurance and can cost more than \$1,350 annually. That is nearly four times the PRP rate. The increasing cost of flood insurance, which is on top of the annual flood protection assessments that my constituents are already paying, compounds their financial burden.

“For these reasons, I believe that it is reasonable to phase-in higher rates over a five year period. I have an amendment that I will offer during debate on the underlying bill that will phase-in the full cost of a flood insurance policies in a more equitable way moving forward. I believe that this is a necessity that will assist homeowners in these trying economic times.

“This is something that I support and look forward to being included in the overall reauthorization. This approach would encourage responsible homeowners across the country to continue paying into the NFIP without adding risk to either the floodplain or the NFIP.”

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